I love the Pope - Isaac

By Jess Denehy

I SUSPECT that trying to capture in a few paragraphs my thoughts and reflections on my WYD08 experience since joining the Diocese of Sale WYD team in June 2007 may be a bit like my attempts to learn how to dance – lots of enthusiasm (if not natural talent) but ultimately I am never really going to be able to do it justice.

The thing is, like dancing, WYD08 was more than just the sum of its parts. It can’t be explained as simply as just putting your feet in this position or moving your body in this particular way and hey presto you’ve got Swan Lake.

You could even talk about the endless hours of blood, sweat and tears that a dancer puts in before they ever hit the stage but that still wouldn’t encapsulate the emotional impact on the dancer or the audience. And as hard as I try, and as much as I beat this metaphor to death, my words are always going to fall short of the grace and challenges that WYD has blessed me with these past 14 months.

It has been such a privilege to be part of the Diocese of Sale’s WYD team. The welcome and enthusiasm we have received across the diocese has made working towards WYD an enjoyable adventure.

Working with the literally hundreds of volunteers who put their hands up to help the diocese host the WYD08 Ball, the Palm Sunday pilgrimage, Journey of the Cross and Icon, and Days in the Diocese has brought me both friendship and inspiration. The generosity of the people of this diocese and their willingness to donate their time and talents towards giving our young people these experiences is quite overwhelming and I am so grateful to all of our volunteers.

Standing at the back of a packed St Mary’s Cathedral during our Pilgrim Commissioning Ceremony host the WYD08 Ball, the Palm Sunday pilgrimage, Journey of the Cross and Icon, and Days in the Diocese has brought me both friendship and inspiration. The generosity of the people of this diocese and their willingness to donate their time and talents towards giving our young people these experiences is quite overwhelming and I am so grateful to all of our volunteers.

I was filled with awe at God’s presence so alive and vibrant in our community. It always humbles me to witness what He can make possible. And as we sang and danced our way through the Pilgrim Carnival I marvelled at what the week in Sydney might also mean to us. Again, I wasn’t disappointed. Not only did WYD08 in Sydney stimulate every physical sense but also that sense of the spiritual. That place inside where God nurtures and sustains you was alive with love, and laughter, and profound joy.

And in the midst of all the color and excitement there was a calmness, a knowing of being amongst half a million people all endeavouring to put themselves in God’s hands.

I have dozens of recollections, both of the big moments and the intimate personal moments, where God’s presence in my life seemed to just about being hitting me over the head with awareness but in the interests

By Liz Roberts

WE had to be ready to leave Olympic Park at 7am. We had been expected back in Grace Pavilion by 11.30pm the night before. My belongings were in a big messy pile. In the morning my friend Penelope helped me roll up my air mattress and I sorted out my things.

We all caught the train to North Sydney. The trip went smoothly so we arrived before our set off time. They let the Sale group start the walk earlier than our time but my group were at the bathroom or running to the chemist for supplies so we set off a little later.

The walk was the biggest challenge for me as my regular walks are around my neighbourhood and I often stop in at friends for cups of tea.

It was a wonderful feeling to walk over the world icon in the presence of the Lord with so many other pilgrims. On the end of the bridge I ran into one of the magazine editors I write for. He took our group’s photo and also helped Sarah and I carry the lunch bag to Darling Harbour which was a great help. Many in my group were beginning to fall sick or suffer from sleep deprivation when what felt like 2km was only considered half a kilometre by the next walker.

On these physical challenges I often gave up or passed of my luggage to others but I’m proud of the fact I did it on my own with a fair bit of prayer along the way. So I guess God was carrying me. I felt a really positive spirit in me after the walk which empowered me to help others in my group who were not feeling well when we arrived Randwick Racecourse.

The pilgrims’ walk

Jessica Denehy

drawing to some conclusion here I’ll just share the one.

On the Wednesday night my group visited Hyde Park to take part in veneration of the WYD Cross and Icon. Surrounded by pilgrims from every continent on earth we made our way into the marquee and knelt down.

Looking up I become aware that at that particular moment images of the Journey of the Cross and Icon through the Diocese of Sale were being projected on the screen. Here I was, a 17 hour bus trip away, and familiar smiling faces from home were welcoming me back to the Cross and Icon. God was meeting me on my journey.

At the beginning of 2007 someone told me that what they wished for me was that I would find a lifetime of great joy in being a Catholic woman. A year and a half later and I would like to agree that what I have experienced and witnessed has brought me overwhelming joy.

However in that joy, I recognise also a challenge and a responsibility to heed God’s call in my life. While this prospect is sometimes daunting this journey towards WYD has brought home to me the gift that such challenges offer.

At the conclusion of the WYD Papal Mass Cardinal Stanislaw Rylko told Pope Benedict XVI that the sea of young WYD08 pilgrims was a beautiful illustration of a young Church, filled with hope, with the joy of faith and with missionary courage.

We are a young Church and we are a young diocese. I pray that our joyful faith and missionary courage will be the ongoing hallmark of our youthful Diocese of Sale.

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